

General Tips for Learning Success

Ways to Improve Your Reading Efficiency and Retention (policy/workbooks)

Reading is a skill necessary in the Workforce Development and Economic Support environment. Policy manuals and handbooks provide the information needed for day-to-day operations. Learning to use these policy resources efficiently is critical. In the training environment, these policy resources will be used in tandem with workbooks. Use the following sections on improving reading efficiency, taking notes, and deciding what to highlight if you need to brush up on your reading efficiency.

Improving Your Reading Efficiency

Cruise through the barrage of information by using key reading and skimming skills.

- Preview the text by reading the introduction and the concluding chapter.
- Reread difficult material. Complex ideas are not always easily caught on the first reading.
- Use additional resources. Consult the dictionary, other training materials, your ATL, and coworkers.
- Use the index or table of contents to locate key words or topics quickly.
- Survey the layout of your reading material. Look at the section headings and piece together the logical flow of the materials.
- If you need to skim, try reading the first sentence of each paragraph to get a general idea of the content.
- Practice reading more quickly by moving your index finger down a row of text at a speed slightly faster than your normal reading speed.
- Sign up for a speed-reading course or seminar.
- Take breaks. Studies show that most people can maintain good concentration for about 50 minutes, after which they need a 10-minute break to absorb information and prepare for further work. Forcing yourself to continue reading when you are mentally tired is ineffective and inefficient, as you tend to reread the same material over and over, and at a slower pace, without retaining the information.

For more information on reading efficiency, go to www.ehow.com and enter “read quickly and effectively” in the “how to” line, or visit your local library to find books, tapes, or videos on this subject.

Taking Notes

Taking good reading notes goes a long way toward helping you retain what you’ve read. Here are steps and tips on taking notes.

- Allow enough time for taking notes.

- Date your notes, and write down where you found the information (the resource).
- Format your notes in a way that is comfortable for you. This could be in outline form, circular form, or using different colors. Experiment with note taking to find the style that works best for you.
- Note pertinent information. Usually this information comes in the beginning or the ending (paragraphs, chapters, etc.)
- In policy references, note the *musts* versus the *mays*. This is an important distinction for what is expected and allowable in your daily operations.
- Review your notes the next day, and again a few days later. This is a time-efficient way to retain the information.

Deciding What to Highlight

How do you figure out what really counts? How do you know what is important enough to highlight for future reference? What if you don't like taking notes? These highlighting steps may help.

- Look briefly over the reading material to get a feel for its structure and how its content is laid out.
- Pay particular attention to introductory and concluding paragraphs. These often contain summaries of important points.
- Look back over the reading material the next day, reading only the highlighted material. Do so again in about a week. This will help in retaining the information.
- Instead of using a highlighting pen, try marking in the margins with a pen or pencil. This will save time.
- Use highlighting to signal a change in sub-topic. It helps break down the information into subcategories. Circle the word/topic, and then highlight those things that relate to it.
- If you find that half of the text is highlighted, you're doing too much. Be more discriminating in highlighting only the key points or key words.